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'Conscience' ended MacGorman's 53-year career at Southwestern
By Marv Knox
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WACO, Texas (ABP) – Conscience keeps Jack MacGorman from teaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a school he loves "more than life itself."

MacGorman, the renowned and beloved New Testament professor, no longer teaches because he will not sign the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message statement, a document the seminary trustees and administration require all faculty members to sign. He described the agony he has felt since ending a five-decade teaching career at the Fort Worth seminary.

"The last two years have been the hardest of my whole life," he told participants in Truett Theological Seminary's recent pastors conference Feb. 5. "For 53 years, I had the privilege of walking into the classrooms of Southwestern Seminary. I worked with some of the finest people I have ever known. I've seen the power of God come down."

But he no longer teaches, he said, "because I take very seriously the Reformation principles of 'sola scriptura' and 'sola fide' – Scripture only and faith only."

MacGorman said he can affirm confessional statements such as the Baptist Faith & Message "so long as they are regarded as group testimonies." But he cannot sign "any confessional statement which is elevated to the word of God, which I regard as the soul of God."

Noting the Southwestern administration has been gracious to him, MacGorman said: "It is not true that I have been dismissed. ... I am given every courtesy. The administration encouraged me to teach as long as I have the health to do so. ...

"It is true that I disqualified myself. I could not continue to teach ... when my brothers and sisters in Christ are disqualified."

Some younger faculty members at Southwestern have not had contracts renewed for refusing to sign the Baptist Faith & Message. Others who could not sign the statement have resigned and taken jobs elsewhere or have retired.

Seminary officials have explained they are merely holding the seminary accountable to the SBC, which owns the school and elects its trustees. Requiring affirmation of the more conservative 2000 version of the Baptist Faith & Message, the faith statement of the SBC, is part of that accountability, President Ken Hemphill has said repeatedly.

"I weep over the grief that has come to so many of God's people," MacGorman said.

"I feel like the father of sons and daughters who don't get along," he said, noting his former students include "men who were spokesmen on both sides" of the theological/political conflict that has torn apart the Southern Baptist Convention.

While he longs to be in the classroom, he acknowledged: "I am not worth anything to anybody with a broken conscience. You can do more with a broken heart than a broken conscience, because God can heal a broken heart.

"If I were in my 50s, I'd expect the Lord to give me another place of duty. But I'm in my 83rd year. I'm not going anywhere."

Southwestern is "a place I love more than life itself," MacGorman said. "I no longer have students to prepare for, but I report to the Lord for duty ... every day school is in session. I am on campus every class day before 8 o'clock.

"I am trying to serve on a campus I love, even when my conscience will not allow me the classroom."

School-prayer guidelines issued to mixed reviews**By Robert Marus****Associated Baptist Press - www.abpnews.com****February 13, 2003****Volume: 03-16-3450**

WASHINGTON (ABP) – The Bush administration has issued a new set of guidelines on religious expression in public schools that may create more controversy than they resolve.

On Feb. 7 the federal Department of Education issued "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools" to public-school administrators across the country.

As a result of the so-called "No Child Left Behind Act," the education bill passed in 2001 and signed into law by President Bush, school districts must demonstrate they do not unconstitutionally limit student religious expression in order to receive federal funds.

But one portion of the guidelines has sparked criticism from groups that support strict separation of church and state. They say in some cases the guidelines implement the Bush administration's favored interpretation of the First Amendment's religious-freedom clauses rather than laying out principles settled by federal courts.

On the topic of "student-initiated" prayer at school events such as assemblies, commencement ceremonies and athletic events, the guidelines read: "Student speakers at student assemblies and extracurricular activities such as sporting events may not be selected on a basis that either favors or disfavors religious speech. Where student speakers are selected on the basis of genuinely neutral, evenhanded criteria and retain primary control over the content of their expression, that expression is not attributable to the school and therefore may not be restricted because of its religious (or anti-religious) content."

However, that issue is far from being a settled matter of federal law, according to Barry Lynn, head of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "Federal courts have split over the legality of some religious activities in public schools, such as so-called 'student-initiated prayer,' at public school events," he said. "Yet these guidelines flatly state that such activities are legal."

"This thing kind of has the flavor of being written by a right-wing law student; it takes far more than is appropriate out of the cases that are there," said Lynn, a frequent critic of Bush policies on church-state issues.

In particular, the guidelines seem to rely heavily on a recent ruling from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that said a Florida school district could allow graduating seniors to hold elections to decide if their classmates could deliver a commencement "message," which often included a prayer. A year ago, the U. S. Supreme Court declined to review that decision.

However, that ruling applies only in the Southeastern states covered by the 11th Circuit. Federal courts in other regions of the country have ruled against similar practices. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional a Texas school district's policy of allowing students to elect a fellow classmate to lead prayers before high-school football games. The court's majority asserted that since the community was overwhelmingly made up of evangelical Protestants, the student elected to pray would invariably give an evangelical Protestant prayer – thus violating the rights of the community's religious minorities.

But Kevin Hasson, president of the Washington-based Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, supports the guidelines and insists they do not contradict the Texas case. "What the guideline says is that if [prayer] is truly student-initiated – if it's not rigged by the school district somehow – then the First Amendment protects it."

The Department of Education under President Clinton issued a set of guidelines on religious expression in public schools in 1995, but they did not contain Bush's assertions on "student-initiated" prayer at school events. Instead, that set of rules was based on a consensus statement on First-Amendment law approved by a diverse set of groups interested in religious freedom.

Those guidelines also did not contain the link to federal funding that the No Child Left Behind Act imposes on schools, and that's why Hasson said the new rules are necessary. "The Clinton guidelines may have been well intentioned, but they were roundly ignored," Hasson said. "These guidelines have teeth. These guidelines ensure that no child will be left behind not only academically, but also with her own spiritual side."

Holly Hollman, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said the guidelines do little or nothing to prevent some kinds of violations of the First Amendment. There are two halves to the Constitution's religious-liberty protections – the free-exercise clause, which prevents government from limiting its citizens' expression of religion, and the establishment clause, which prohibits government from supporting or endorsing religion.

"Instead of pushing compliance with both free-exercise-clause and establishment-clause values, the guidelines appear to make free-exercise concerns paramount," Hollman said. "They threaten to punish schools that fail to guarantee certain student and teacher religious speech. Yet no comparable punishment exists for school-sponsored religion."

But Hasson said that depends on how one interprets the establishment clause. "There's plenty of stuff in the rules that sets limits on what the government can do," Hasson said. "The establishment clause not only bars promotion of religion, it also bars hostility to religion. Certainly, the guidelines bar that."

Besides, Hasson said, the guidelines were not issued to protect students from government promotion of religion.

"Nobody has any doubts really that the establishment clause will be enforced in public schools; that's not where mistakes are being made," he said. "It's not the case that teachers all over the country are trying to smuggle religion in to the classroom; it's the case that teachers all over the country are trying to squelch it."

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Students urged to lead church out of 'institutional captivity'

By Ken Camp

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BELTON, Texas (ABP) – God may be calling a new Moses to lead the church "out of the captivity of institutionalism" - and that leader may come from a university campus – Reggie McNeal told a group of Christian students recently.

Christianity grows increasingly vibrant in parts of the world where it is a "movement in the streets," said McNeal, a leadership consultant from Columbia, S.C. But in the United States, the church largely remains bound by institutional structures, he said.

"Consider that you may have been put on the planet to lead the church out of the captivity of institutionalism," McNeal challenged Texas Baptists' Christian Association of Student Leaders.

"In North America, we have shrink-wrapped the energy of the gospel of Jesus Christ into real estate, programs and people processes. We are desperate for people like you to come along and recapture the energy."

McNeal is director of leadership development for the South Carolina Baptist Convention and author of "A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders." He was keynote speaker for the conference, which attracted more than 200 leaders of student government, university ministries, fraternities, sororities and other aspects of campus life. God uses at least four things to shape the heart of a Christian leader, McNeal told the students:

– Culture. Current student leaders are "amphibians," born in the modern era but having come of age in a postmodern world, he explained. They not only understand the emerging culture and the challenge of multi-culturalism, but also have roots in the old way of being. As a result, Christian leaders on college campuses can help churches move "out of the institution and into the streets."

"You are a special breed of leader God put on this planet for just such a time as this. It takes enormous courage to lead in transition times," McNeal said.

Instead of inviting people to "become like us in order to join the club," churches must "go open up shop where people already hang out," he said. "We cannot afford to think and act like club members. We have to think and act like missionaries who know how to penetrate the culture, not just manage activities for club members."

–Community. Leaders are shaped by their families of origin – their original communities – and by the people they lead. Because they are leaders, they shape the lives of others within their community. "The way we live our lives, we are building somebody's past. Our decisions create the past others draw from," he said.

–Communion. Christian leaders critically need real "face time with God," McNeal said, not just time spent filling in the blanks of a discipleship workbook. "You are shaped through communion. Listen, hang out and get to know God. Don't settle for anything less than a relationship."

–Conflict. Student leaders need to realize that "conflict goes with the territory of leadership," he said.

Some critics are helpful teachers who should be heeded; some are "saboteurs" who must be dealt with decisively; and some are just "gnats" who need to be ignored, McNeal said. Young Christian leaders need the direction of Scripture and the counsel of wise, godly friends to discern the difference, he added.

Leaders understand that reconciliation with every enemy may be impossible, because reconciliation demands the cooperation of all parties involved in a conflict. But forgiveness is a unilateral decision that always is possible. "Forgiveness will keep conflict from scarring your soul," he said. "When we don't forgive, we put ourselves in a jail, inside a cell that opens from the inside."

Chapman urges Texas churches to redirect funds to SBC**By Mark Wingfield****Associated Baptist Press - www.abpnews.com****February 13, 2003****Volume: 03-16-3452**

DALLAS (ABP) – In a letter mailed to thousands of Texas Baptist pastors and lay leaders, Morris Chapman uses the death of three missionaries in Yemen as a rallying call for greater giving to the Southern Baptist Convention and reduced giving to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

This is the third consecutive year Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, has written to pastors, deacon chairs, church treasurers and other local-church leaders in a direct appeal for giving. A similar letter in 2001 was believed to be the first time an SBC official made a direct appeal for Cooperative Program giving to Texas churches while bypassing the state convention.

The appeal is necessary, Chapman's letter and accompanying literature explain, because the BGCT is promoting an adopted budget that reduces funding to SBC causes. In reality, the BGCT's budget for 2003 restores funding to the Executive Committee, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and six SBC seminaries – reversing funding caps enacted two years ago.

Only about one-third of BGCT churches use the convention-adopted budget. The remaining two-thirds create their own giving plans, as allowed by BGCT policy.

Chapman's letter encourages churches to use this flexibility to give more money to the SBC and less to the BGCT. The mailing includes two illustration sheets, one for giving through the BGCT and one for giving through the rival Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

The mailing was only sent to churches affiliated with the BGCT, however, said Becky Bridges, director of communications for the BGCT.

In his letter, Chapman makes repeated reference to the three Southern Baptist mission workers who were slain Dec. 30 at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen by an Islamic extremist.

"Not many of us may make the sacrifice of losing our life in a martyr's death," he wrote. "Certainly, none of us would do less than make a sacrifice of bountiful, abundant, extravagant giving."

His letter does not mention that the SBC International Mission Board has since turned control of the hospital over to the Muslim-run Yemeni government, a move most hospital workers opposed.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade urged Texas Baptist churches not to be persuaded by Chapman's letter. Many BGCT churches still strongly support the SBC and the International Mission Board, he said, noting that last year the BGCT sent \$32.3 million to support SBC causes.

Bridges said she estimates the cost of printing and mailing Chapman's letter to be at least \$10,000. "That's straight out of the money we just gave back to them in Cooperative Program support to the Southern Baptist Convention," she said. "That's a lot of money that could have gone to international missions."



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Gutenberg's digital descendant spreads the Word via Internet

By Tony Cartledge

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) – Before Johann Gutenberg built his printing press and started publishing books in 1450, Bibles were painstakingly copied by hand. Only a privileged few had access to Scripture, most of them priests.

One of Gutenberg's goals for the printing press was to make the Bible available "by a machine which never wearies to every soul which enters life."

More than 500 years later, a spiritual descendant of Gutenberg is doing his own part to distribute Scripture more cheaply and widely, this time via a Bible study software program distributed freely over the Internet.

Dissatisfied with commercial Bible study programs, California native Rick Meyers decided in 2000 to write his own. He started writing computer code in January 2000 and completed version 1.0 of e-Sword three months later. He immediately posted it on the Internet.

Users soon discovered the program, creating such a demand that Meyers had to find greater bandwidth for his server. Favorable reviews drove more traffic to the site. By June 2001 more than 100,000 users had downloaded the program from www.e-sword.net.

E-Sword allows users to choose which Bible translations and study resources they want. Since the program is free, most of the translations and study materials offered are in the public domain, and many popular translations are unavailable. Still, users can choose from more than 40 different Bible translations in 14 languages, including versions in Chinese, Russian, Ukrainian and most European languages.

The King James Version is available with Strong's reference numbers, which key the text to dictionary references showing the underlying Hebrew or Greek word. Potential add-ons include multiple commentaries and Bible dictionaries, an atlas, charts, and artwork related to the Bible.

As demand continued to grow, Meyers found a series of supportive friends to donate server space and bandwidth, ultimately moving to Fiber Network Solutions, which provides access to a Tier One national Internet backbone.

In November of 2001, the company for which Meyers worked went bankrupt and Meyers, who lives in Nashville, Tenn., began working on e-Sword full-time. He still offers the program at no cost, though users are invited to make donations to a non-profit organization he founded to support the ministry.

Meyers continued to add features to the program through 2002 – now up to version 6.5 – with downloads growing. "Every day, users download more than 2,000 copies of the base program, and about 700,000 additional files are downloaded each month," he said.

A built-in word processor allows users to import text, add their own notes, highlight key passages and print. A new feature includes a pop-up daily calendar with a place to record and follow-up on prayer requests.

Meyers is glad to provide e-Sword as a free alternative to commercial Bible study programs, which can cost hundreds of dollars. But he is even more excited about the accessibility of e-Sword in countries that normally frown on Bible distribution.

Since the program requires only a PC and an Internet connection, people who once took their lives in hand to obtain smuggled Bibles can now take their mouse in hand and download Scripture in their own language at no cost and less risk.

For example, Meyers said the Chinese modules were downloaded more than 5,000 times in November 2002, and Russian modules were downloaded more than 2,000 times.

Users from more than 100 countries on six continents have downloaded the program, Meyers said. Total downloads now exceed 800,000.

Papa Gutenberg would be proud.



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News briefs from Associated Baptist Press
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Davis to retire as dean at Logsdon

ABILENE, Texas) --Vernon Davis will retire as dean of the Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University in May.

Davis joined the HSU faculty in 1995 as professor of theology and director of graduate theology studies. He became Logsdon dean in 1998. Earlier he was vice president for academic affairs at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Logsdon is one of two seminaries affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Those schools have taken on greater prominence in recent years, as the BGCT has focused less attention on seminaries controlled by the Southern Baptist Convention. "Training ministers for the next generation during this period has been both rewarding and challenging," Davis said. "Trends in contemporary culture have made this task both crucial and difficult. The internal conflicts in Baptist life have created the need for recovery of an authentic understanding of Baptist heritage as well as the shaping of a new vision of ministry for the future." (ABP)

First church leaves North Carolina convention

NEWLAND, N.C. -- One North Carolina Baptist church decided Jan. 15 to leave the state's Baptist convention even while an uneasy truce still holds between conservatives and moderates.

First Baptist Church of Newland is the first church officially to pull out of the state convention because of the conservative-moderate controversy. At the same time, the congregation voted to leave its local association and the Southern Baptist Convention, effectively becoming a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship church.

The church's departure was prompted by the state convention's decision last November to reconsider the funding plan that allows churches like First Baptist of Newland to channel some funds to the CBF and other groups. Some convention observers believe more moderate churches will pull out if that option, called Plan C, is removed or significantly altered. (ABP)

Texas Baptists name board for world missions DALLAS -- The initial 32-member board of directors for Texas Baptists' world mission network has been named and will meet for the first time Feb. 20-21.

In November 2002, the Baptist General Convention of Texas voted to create a world missions network to help churches, associations and individuals "fulfill their missions calling through both short-term and long-term missions endeavors across the United States and the world."

Justice Anderson of Fort Worth, a former Southern Baptist missionary in Argentina and professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for 27 years, was named board chairman. Albert Reyes, president of Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio, is vice chairman.

One-fourth of the board is non-Anglo, including the president of the Texas Baptist African-American Fellowship. More than one-fourth of the board is female. Other board members include pastors, directors of missions, career missionaries and lay leaders. Among them is Keith Parks, former president of the Southern Baptist Foreign (now International) Mission Board and later missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. (ABP)

Causey to lead WMU's missions resource center

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- Carol Causey has been named director of the missions resource center for Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

"With 17 years of dedicated service to WMU, Carol clearly understands our organization," said Executive Director

Wanda Lee Causey has served in a variety of roles, most recently as editorial department director, since joining the WMU staff in 1986.

A native of Amarillo, Texas, Causey holds a bachelor's degree from West Texas State University in Canyon, Texas, and a master's and doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. (ABP)

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